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EXAMINER

HAND, MELANIE JO

ART UNIT PAPER NUMBER

3761

SHORTENED STATUTORY PERIOD OF RESPONSE	MAIL DATE	DELIVERY MODE
3 MONTHS	03/27/2007	PAPER

**Please find below and/or attached an Office communication concerning this application or proceeding.**

If NO period for reply is specified above, the maximum statutory period will apply and will expire 6 MONTHS from the mailing date of this communication.

**Office Action Summary**

Application No.

10/809,492

Applicant(s)

GUIDOTTI ET AL.

Examiner

Melanie J. Hand

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-- The MAILING DATE of this communication appears on the cover sheet with the correspondence address --

**Period for Reply**

A SHORTENED STATUTORY PERIOD FOR REPLY IS SET TO EXPIRE 3 MONTH(S) OR THIRTY (30) DAYS, WHICHEVER IS LONGER, FROM THE MAILING DATE OF THIS COMMUNICATION.

- Extensions of time may be available under the provisions of 37 CFR 1.136(a). In no event, however, may a reply be timely filed after SIX (6) MONTHS from the mailing date of this communication.
- If NO period for reply is specified above, the maximum statutory period will apply and will expire SIX (6) MONTHS from the mailing date of this communication.
- Failure to reply within the set or extended period for reply will, by statute, cause the application to become ABANDONED (35 U.S.C. § 133). Any reply received by the Office later than three months after the mailing date of this communication, even if timely filed, may reduce any earned patent term adjustment. See 37 CFR 1.704(b).

**Status**

- 1) ☒ Responsive to communication(s) filed on 27 December 2006.
- 2a) ☒ This action is **FINAL**. 2b) ☐ This action is non-final.
- 3) ☐ Since this application is in condition for allowance except for formal matters, prosecution as to the merits is closed in accordance with the practice under *Ex parte Quayle*, 1935 C.D. 11, 453 O.G. 213.

**Disposition of Claims**

- 4) ☒ Claim(s) 1-24 and 26-29 is/are pending in the application.
- 4a) Of the above claim(s) \_\_\_\_\_ is/are withdrawn from consideration.
- 5) ☐ Claim(s) \_\_\_\_\_ is/are allowed.
- 6) ☒ Claim(s) 1-24, 26-29 is/are rejected.
- 7) ☐ Claim(s) \_\_\_\_\_ is/are objected to.
- 8) ☐ Claim(s) \_\_\_\_\_ are subject to restriction and/or election requirement.

**Application Papers**

- 9) ☐ The specification is objected to by the Examiner.
- 10) ☐ The drawing(s) filed on \_\_\_\_\_ is/are: a) ☐ accepted or b) ☐ objected to by the Examiner.  
Applicant may not request that any objection to the drawing(s) be held in abeyance. See 37 CFR 1.85(a).  
Replacement drawing sheet(s) including the correction is required if the drawing(s) is objected to. See 37 CFR 1.121(d).
- 11) ☐ The oath or declaration is objected to by the Examiner. Note the attached Office Action or form PTO-152.

**Priority under 35 U.S.C. § 119**

- 12) ☐ Acknowledgment is made of a claim for foreign priority under 35 U.S.C. § 119(a)-(d) or (f).
- a) ☐ All b) ☐ Some \* c) ☐ None of:
- ☐ Certified copies of the priority documents have been received.
  - ☐ Certified copies of the priority documents have been received in Application No. \_\_\_\_\_.
  - ☐ Copies of the certified copies of the priority documents have been received in this National Stage application from the International Bureau (PCT Rule 17.2(a)).

\* See the attached detailed Office action for a list of the certified copies not received.

**Attachment(s)**

- |  |   |
|--|---|
| 1) <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Notice of References Cited (PTO-892)                                | 4) <input type="checkbox"/> Interview Summary (PTO-413)<br>Paper No(s)/Mail Date. _____ |
| 2) <input type="checkbox"/> Notice of Draftsperson's Patent Drawing Review (PTO-948)                       | 5) <input type="checkbox"/> Notice of Informal Patent Application                       |
| 3) <input type="checkbox"/> Information Disclosure Statement(s) (PTO/SB/08)<br>Paper No(s)/Mail Date _____ | 6) <input type="checkbox"/> Other: _____  |

## DETAILED ACTION

### *Response to Arguments*

Applicant's arguments filed December 27, 2006 with respect to claims 1-6, 9-19, 22-24 and 26-28 have been fully considered but they are not persuasive.

With respect to applicant's arguments regarding claim 1: Applicant argues that Bernardin teaches away from including superabsorbent material (hereafter, "SAP") in the first high density component 10 (first storage layer) by providing as support the citation of col. 5, lines 16-24 of Bernardin. Examiner disagrees with this argument because this citation merely states the purpose for sandwiching a superabsorbent layer 9 between first and second storage layers 10,11. It does not logically follow from this teaching that superabsorbent cannot be placed in the first storage layer 10. The citation offered by applicant as support is merely describing an embodiment in which SAP 9 is added in layer form, and the teaching is therefore cited out of context by applicant. In fact, Col. 4, lines 33-35 describe an embodiment in which the SAP 9 is included as part of the absorbent material 4, which serves to support Examiner's position that SAP could be placed in another absorbent layer, the first storage layer 10, with a reasonable expectation of success as both the first storage layer and the absorbent layer perform a substantially identical function, differing only in their overall absorbent capacity. See *In re Fulton*, 73 USPQ2d 1141,1146 (Fed. Cir. 2004)

Applicant further argues with respect to the density limitation in claim 1 that Bernardin teaches away from modifying the density outside the range taught. This citation is also taken out of context by applicant because, if applicant were to read further, applicant would see that this density range is based upon a load of 0.2 psi. Adjusting this load would very clearly allow for density value modifications outside this range. The load and the density are result-effective

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variables because Bernardin teaches that they dictate the stiffness and capillarity of the article. Thus it would be obvious to one of ordinary skill in the art to modify these result-effective variables to arrive at the claimed density with a reasonable expectation of success, as modifying these values involves only routine skill in the art. For the purpose of clarification, however, the rejection of claim 1 has been restated to include this response to applicant's argument.

Applicant further argues with respect to the apertures or recesses set forth in claim 1 that Bernardin teaches pores and thus does not render the claim unpatentable. As an initial matter, applicant is reminded that when alternative claim language is used, Examiner may interpret the claim using either term. Examiner chose apertures, a genus which includes pores. Applicant further argues that Examiner did not read the definition of aperture in light of the specification. Examiner disagrees and refers applicant to Col. 6, lines 59-65 in which Bernardin discusses criticality with respect to pore size distribution overlap between the density layers 5,6 (or 10,11- Col. 5, lines 37,38) by stating that such distribution regulates flowback from the high density layer to the low density layer. Therefore the pores necessarily extend through the thickness of the first and second storage layers and thus pores are defined by Bernardin as having the same structure as the claimed pores.

Applicant's arguments regarding claim 2 pertain to varying the device of Bernardin so as to meet the claim limitation of claim 2. This argument is similar to applicant's argument with respect to claim 1 which has been addressed supra.

Applicant's arguments regarding claims 4 and 19 pertain to the perceived mischaracterization of the definition of claimed term "pore" by Examiner. Which argument has been addressed supra.

Applicant's arguments with respect to claims 8 and 21 have been considered but are moot in view of the new ground(s) of rejection.

With respect to applicant's arguments regarding claim 9, Examiner has clearly explained in the rejection of claim 9 in the previous Office action the grounds for rejection. Specifically, the article as taught by Bernardin wherein the acquisition layer and the topsheet are thermally joined at the edges yields an article that is substantially structurally identical to an article taught by Bernardin in which the acquisition layer and topsheet are thermally joined in a hollow space created by the pores in first storage layer 10.

With respect to applicant's arguments regarding claims 14 and 22, applicant has made a similar argument for second storage component 11 as the argument addressed supra with respect to first storage layer 10 taught by Bernardin in the rejection of claim 1. Accordingly, Examiner will not reiterate the response as the response made supra also applies to applicant's arguments regarding the second storage layer of Bernardin.

With respect to applicant's arguments regarding claims 15 and 23, at applicant's request, Examiner provides the following references for support of the rejection only and not as a new grounds for rejection:

Applicants' arguments with regard to dependent claims 5 and 6 have been fully considered but are not persuasive as Applicants' arguments depend entirely on Applicants' arguments regarding the rejection of claim 1, which have been addressed *supra*.

With respect to applicant's arguments regarding claims 10 and 12: Applicant argues that one would not be motivated to use the foam material taught by Berg for the acquisition layer taught by Bernardin because one would not put a superabsorbent foam on a non-superabsorbent layer. Examiner is unclear regarding applicant's basis for this argument for two reasons: 1) absorbent articles containing superabsorbent foams superimposed on a non-superabsorbent layer are well-known in the art (e.g. a foam core above a liquid-impermeable barrier sheet) and function properly without incident, and 2) the fact that acquisition layer 5 is

specifically designed to transfer waste fluid to the first storage layer 10 is immaterial as that design and function would not be impeded in any way. The fact that a superabsorbent foam can hold more exudates than the non-superabsorbent layer below it does not mean that it completely blocks the progress of the exudates to said lower non-superabsorbent layer. Applicant has not clearly defined in the disclosure what constitutes "properly transfer[ing] liquid" (Remarks, page 13)

With respect to applicant's arguments regarding claim 11: Applicant argues that one would not be motivated to use the foam that is created as a backing to a fastener as taught by Shepard for a material for the acquisition layer taught by Bernardin. The foam taught by Shepard is created as a separate process step and thus can be used for any appropriate application at that point, which includes any layer of absorbent material in an absorbent article. Further, Shepard teaches that the foam is a backing, which is in fact a layer of an absorbent article, either integrally with a chassis or attached thereto. Since the foam is absorbent, provides a desired stiffness and is used in a diaper, the foam as backing seeks to solve a similar problem in the art to the device of Bernardin (i.e. foam as a layer of absorbent article to impart a desired stiffness), thus it is Examiner's position that one would in fact be motivated to use the foam taught by Shepard in the acquisition layer taught by Bernardin

Applicants' arguments with regard to dependent claim 13 have been fully considered but are not persuasive as Applicants' arguments depend entirely on Applicants' arguments regarding the rejection of claim 1, which have been addressed *supra*.

Applicants' arguments with regard to new dependent claims 26 and 28 have been fully considered but are not persuasive as Applicants' arguments depend entirely on Applicants' arguments regarding the rejection of claim 1, which have been addressed *supra*.

***Claim Rejections - 35 USC § 112***

The following is a quotation of the first paragraph of 35 U.S.C. 112:

The specification shall contain a written description of the invention, and of the manner and process of making and using it, in such full, clear, concise, and exact terms as to enable any person skilled in the art to which it pertains, or with which it is most nearly connected, to make and use the same and shall set forth the best mode contemplated by the inventor of carrying out his invention.

Claims 7 and 20 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. 112, first paragraph, as failing to comply with the written description requirement. The claim(s) contains subject matter which was not described in the specification in such a way as to reasonably convey to one skilled in the relevant art that the inventor(s), at the time the application was filed, had possession of the claimed invention. There is no support in the disclosure for an acquisition layer located between a first storage layer and a topsheet. The support exists only for the opposite, i.e. a first storage layer between a topsheet and an acquisition layer.

***Claim Rejections - 35 USC § 103***

The text of those sections of Title 35, U.S. Code not included in this action can be found in a prior Office action.

Claims 1-4, 7-9, 14, 15 and 19-23 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over Bernardin (U.S. Patent No. 5,009,650) in view of Guidotti et al (U.S. Patent No. 6,037,518).

With respect to **Claims 1,16**: Bernardin teaches an absorbent article 1 comprising a liquid permeable upper surface defined by the upper surface of liquid permeable liner 2 and an absorbent structure 4, which article in the longitudinal direction has a crotch portion seen in Fig. 1 and two end portions also seen in Fig. 1, wherein the absorbent structure 4 comprises an

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acquisition layer 5 and at least one first storage layer 10 wherein said first storage layer 10 comprises at least 50 percent by weight of a super absorbent material calculated on the total weight of the first storage layer, wherein the first storage layer 10 in a dry condition has a density between 0.14 – 0.3 g/cc and therefore does not teach a dry density exceeding 0.4 g/cm.sup.3. First storage layer 10 in the crotch portion of the absorbent structure has apertures or recesses in the form of pores.

Applicant has not assigned sufficient criticality to a dry density exceeding 0.4 g/cc, therefore the limitation is considered herein to be an optimization of the dry density. It would be obvious to one of ordinary skill in the art to further increase the density of the high-density layers 10,11 taught by Bernardin so as to have a density exceeding 0.4 g/cc, as Bernardin teaches that such high-density layers acquire and hold waste so as to prevent leakage.

Bernardin also does not teach that the high-density layers contain superabsorbent material. Guidotti teaches an absorbent article having a separate acquisition layer and storage layer wherein the storage layer is comprised of at least 10-80% superabsorbent material by weight of said storage layer. Since Guidotti teaches a storage layer that draws fluid from an acquisition layer, i.e. the storage layer of Guidotti performs an identical function to the storage layer of Bernardin, it would be obvious to one of ordinary skill in the art to include superabsorbent in the storage layer of Bernardin in an amount between 10-80% as taught by Guidotti with a reasonable expectation of success. This range satisfies the relevant limitation of claim 1.

With respect to **Claim 2**: Bernardin does not teach a dry density exceeding 0.5 g/cm.sup.3.

Applicant has not assigned sufficient criticality to a dry density exceeding 0.5 g/cc, therefore the limitation is considered herein to be an optimization of the dry density. It would be obvious to



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one of ordinary skill in the art to further increase the density of the high-density layers 10,11 taught by Bernardin so as to have a density exceeding 0.4 g/cc, as Bernardin teaches that such high-density layers acquire and hold waste so as to prevent leakage.

With respect to **Claim 3**: Bernardin also does not teach that the high-density layers contain superabsorbent material in an amount of at least 70% by weight. Guidotti teaches an absorbent article having a separate acquisition layer and storage layer wherein the storage layer is comprised of at least 10-80% superabsorbent material by weight of said storage layer. Since Guidotti teaches a storage layer that draws fluid from an acquisition layer, i.e. the storage layer of Guidotti performs an identical function to the storage layer of Bernardin, it would be obvious to one of ordinary skill in the art to include superabsorbent in the storage layer of Bernardin in an amount between 10-80% as taught by Guidotti with a reasonable expectation of success. This range satisfies the relevant limitation of claim 3.

With respect to **Claims 4,19**: Bernardin teaches that first storage layer 10 contains pores, which Examiner considers herein to be an aperture that extends through an entire thickness of the first storage layer.

With respect to **Claims 7,20**: The first storage layer 10 has a first surface facing the liquid permeable upper surface of the article and a second surface facing away from the liquid permeable surface of the article, wherein the acquisition layer 5 lies close to the first surface of the storage layer 10 as seen in Fig. 7.

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With respect to **Claims 8,21**: Bernardin does not teach that the acquisition layer is placed between the topsheet 2 and the first storage layer 10, however placing an acquisition layer between a topsheet and a storage layer (e.g. an absorbent core) is well known in the art (see U.S. Patent No. 6,479,415 to Erspamer et al, Col. 1, lines 18-22, 31-34, 65 – Col. 2, line 1). Therefore since the device of Bernardin seeks to solve a similar problem in the art, it would be obvious to one of ordinary skill in the art to modify the device of Bernardin such that said acquisition layer is placed between said topsheet and said first storage layer with a reasonable expectation of success.

With respect to **Claim 9**: Bernardin does not teach that the liquid permeable top sheet 2 and the acquisition layer 5 are thermally joined in a hollow space in the first storage layer created by said apertures or recesses. However, an article as taught by Bernardin in which the acquisition layer 5 is bonded in the manner set forth in claim 9 would produce a substantially structurally identical article to that taught by Bernardin in the instant invention. It would be obvious to one of ordinary skill in the art to bond the acquisition layer taught by Bernardin such that the layer is thermally bonded in the recesses as an alternative to simply bonding the acquisition layer to the topsheet at the peripheral edges as taught by Bernardin. Rejection under 35 U.S.C. 103 is indicated where prior art discloses product that appears to be either identical with or only slightly different from product claimed in product-by-process claim. See *In re Fitzgerald, Sanders, & Bagheri*, 205 USPQ 594 (CCPA 1980).

With respect to **Claims 14,22**: The absorbent structure 1 further comprises a second storage layer 11. Bernardin teaches that the two storage layers are each equivalent to a single storage layer 6 in an alternate embodiment, and Bernardin teaches combining said storage layer 6 (and

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thus by extension layer 11) with other absorbents to achieve a lower density depending upon the application of the absorbent structure of the instant invention. Bernardin does not explicitly teach that the high-density layers contain superabsorbent material or that second storage layer 11 contains less superabsorbent by weight than first storage layer 10.

Guidotti teaches an absorbent article having a separate acquisition layer and storage layer wherein the storage layer is comprised of at least 10-80% superabsorbent material by weight of said storage layer. Since Guidotti teaches a storage layer that draws fluid from an acquisition layer, i.e. the storage layer of Guidotti performs an identical function to the storage layer of Bernardin, it would be obvious to one of ordinary skill in the art to include superabsorbent in the storage layers 10,11 of Bernardin with a reasonable expectation of success. The combined teaching of Bernardin thus teaches a second storage layer having a lower density (i.e. lower amount of superabsorbent) than a first storage layer.

With respect to **Claim 15,23**: Bernardin teaches second storage layer 11 but does not teach that said second storage layer partly or entirely encloses the first storage layer. However, it would be obvious to one of ordinary skill in the art to expand the surface area of said second storage layer so as to partly or entirely enclose said first storage layer as the increased surface storage area allows for greater fluid handling capability and prevention of leakage.

With respect to **Claim 17**: The absorbent structure 4 comprises an acquisition layer 5 and at least one first storage layer 10 wherein said first storage layer 10 comprises at least 50 percent by weight of a super absorbent material calculated on the total weight of the first storage layer

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With respect to **Claim 18**: The first storage layer 10 in a dry condition has a density between 0.14 – 0.3 g/cc and therefore does not teach a dry density exceeding 0.4 g/cm.<sup>sup.3</sup>. First storage layer 10 in the crotch portion of the absorbent structure has apertures or recesses in the form of pores.

Applicant has not assigned sufficient criticality to a dry density exceeding 0.4 g/cc, therefore the limitation is considered herein to be an optimization of the dry density. It would be obvious to one of ordinary skill in the art to further increase the density of the high-density layers 10,11 taught by Bernardin so as to have a density exceeding 0.4 g/cc, as Bernardin teaches that such high-density layers acquire and hold waste so as to prevent leakage.

With respect to **claims 27,29**: The pores (apertures) taught by Bernardin are spaces capable of holding liquid before the liquid is absorbed by said first storage layer 10, as the boundaries of the pores are defined by absorbent fibers. ('650, Col. 5, lines 59-65)

Claims 5, 6, 26 and 28 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over Bernardin (U.S. Patent No. 5,009,650) in view of Guidotti et al (U.S. Patent No. 6,037,518) as applied to claims 1-4, 7-9, 14, 15, 19-23, 27 and 29 above, and further in view of Lassen et al (U.S. Patent Application Publication No. 2002/0013563).

With respect to **Claims 5,26,28**: Bernardin does not teach that said apertures extend along the longitudinal direction of the absorbent structure, wherein the apertures or recesses comprise longitudinal channels. Lassen teaches that the recesses define a segmented core with segments of this width so as to accommodate flexure axes to allow it to bend preferentially convexly toward the user's body to put said article in a more advantageous position to perform

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its function, therefore it would be obvious to one of ordinary skill in the art to modify the device of Bernardin so as to have apertures comprising longitudinal channels having a width of no greater than 20 mm as this allows the crotch portion of the article to conform to fit the crotch area of the user as taught by Lassen.

With respect to **Claim 6**: Lassen teaches that the width of article 10 is in the range of 2-10 cm, or 20-100 mm (§ 0057), therefore the material between will exhibit a width being maximally 20 mm.

Claims 10 and 12 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over Bernardin (U.S. Patent No. 5,009,650) in view of Guidotti et al (U.S. Patent No. 6,037,518) as applied to claims 1-4, 7-9, 14, 15, 19-23, 27 and 29 above, and further in view of Berg et al (U.S. Patent No. 5,180,622).

With respect to **Claims 10 and 12**: Bernardin does not teach that acquisition layer 11 is comprised of polyacrylate foam material. Berg teaches a polyacrylate foam material used in an absorbent core 41 of a diaper 20. (Fig. 1) (Col. 22, lines 61-65). Said absorbent core is comprised of an acquisition zone 56 (Col. 32, lines 35-44) and since the core material is uniform throughout, said acquisition zone 56 is also comprised of polyacrylate foam material. (claim 10) Berg teaches that said foam material is formed by an acrylic acid monomer allowed to polymerize with the aid of an interparticle crosslinking agent sprayed on the acrylic acid monomers. (Col. 7, lines 40-46, Co. 14, lines 28-39) (claim 12) Berg teaches that such a material especially in film form integrated in an absorbent article enhances fluid uptake rate and minimizes gel blocking (Abstract), therefore it would obvious to one of ordinary skill in the art to

modify the acquisition layer taught by Bernardin to be comprised of a polyacrylate foam sheet material as taught by Berg.

Claim 11 is rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable Bernardin (U.S. Patent No. 5,009,650) in view of Guidotti et al (U.S. Patent No. 6,037,518) and further in view of Berg et al (U.S. Patent No. 5,180,622) as applied to claims 10 and 12 above, and further in view of Shepard et al (U.S. Patent No. 6,869,659).

With respect to **Claim 11**: The combined teaching of Bernardin and Guidotti and Berg does not teach an absorbent article comprising a polyacrylate foam acquisition layer having a Gurley stiffness of less than 1,000 mgf.

Shepard teaches a foam coating applied to a nonwoven web as a backing that is an acrylic foam. Shepard teaches that the web having the foam coating is the backing for a loop fastener fabric, wherein the loop fabric has a Gurley stiffness of less than 300 mg. The loop fabric has a slight stiffness that Shepard teaches can be reduced, therefore the stiffness of the foam itself cannot be greater than 1,000 mgf if the stiffness of the entire fabric, comprised of thin flexible nonwoven materials, has a stiffness of less than about 300 mgf. Shepard teaches that such a foam coating results in a thin, flexible loop fastener fabric, therefore it would be obvious to one of ordinary skill in the art to employ a foam layer or coating in the article taught by the combined teaching of Bernardin and Guidotti and Berg so as to have a Gurley stiffness for the acquisition layer of less than 300 mgf as taught by Shepard.

Claim 13 is rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over Bernardin (U.S. Patent No. 5,009,650) in view of Guidotti et al (U.S. Patent No. 6,037,518) as applied to claims

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1-4, 7-9, 14, 15, 19-23, 27 and 29 above, and further in view of McBride (U.S. Patent Application Publication No. 2004/0019340).

With respect to **Claim 13**: The combined teaching of Bernardin and Guidotti does not teach corona treating the acquisition layer 5. McBride teaches an absorbent article having a topsheet and acquisition layer in which either or both are treated to improve affinity to water and water handling, therefore it would be obvious to one of ordinary skill in the art to corona treat the acquisition layer taught by the combined teaching of Bernardin and Guidotti to improve its affinity for water and fluid handling as taught by McBride. ('340, ¶0037)

#### ***Conclusion***

**THIS ACTION IS MADE FINAL.** Applicant is reminded of the extension of time policy as set forth in 37 CFR 1.136(a).

A shortened statutory period for reply to this final action is set to expire **THREE MONTHS** from the mailing date of this action. In the event a first reply is filed within **TWO MONTHS** of the mailing date of this final action and the advisory action is not mailed until after the end of the **THREE-MONTH** shortened statutory period, then the shortened statutory period will expire on the date the advisory action is mailed, and any extension fee pursuant to 37 CFR 1.136(a) will be calculated from the mailing date of the advisory action. In no event, however, will the statutory period for reply expire later than **SIX MONTHS** from the mailing date of this final action.

Any inquiry concerning this communication or earlier communications from the examiner should be directed to Melanie J. Hand whose telephone number is 571-272-6464. The examiner can normally be reached on Mon-Thurs 8:00-5:30, alternate Fridays 8:00-4:30.

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If attempts to reach the examiner by telephone are unsuccessful, the examiner's supervisor, Tatyana Zalukaeva can be reached on 571-272-1115. The fax phone number for the organization where this application or proceeding is assigned is 571-273-8300.

Information regarding the status of an application may be obtained from the Patent Application Information Retrieval (PAIR) system. Status information for published applications may be obtained from either Private PAIR or Public PAIR. Status information for unpublished applications is available through Private PAIR only. For more information about the PAIR system, see <http://pair-direct.uspto.gov>. Should you have questions on access to the Private PAIR system, contact the Electronic Business Center (EBC) at 866-217-9197 (toll-free). If you would like assistance from a USPTO Customer Service Representative or access to the automated information system, call 800-786-9199 (IN USA OR CANADA) or 571-272-1000.

Melanie J Hand  
Examiner  
Art Unit 3761

March 20, 2007

**TATYANA ZALUKAEVA**  
**SUPERVISORY PRIMARY EXAMINER**

